

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8437

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CONFIDENTIAL TANANARIVE 1465

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINT, MA

SUBJECT: SOME STUDENTS STILL OUT OF CLASSES AS GDRM BLAMES

EXTREME LEFTWING GROUP AND IMPERIALISTS FOR

FOR PALACE FIRE

REF: TANANARIVE 1451

1. STUDENT STRIKE. ALTHOUGH UNIVERSITY AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS IN TANANARIVE APPEAR TO BE BACK ON NORMAL SCHEDULE, AND IN SPITE OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR'S ORDER TO RETURN TO SCHOOL (REFTEL), SOME STUDENTS OF BOTH TANANARIVE TECHNICAL SCHOOLS ARE STILL BOYCOTTING CLASSES AND GATHERING IN GROUPS NEAR SCHOOLS. REPORTS INDICATE THAT THESE GROUPS NUMBER ONLY 30-40, BUT "ANTI-STRIKE" STUDENTS AND ONLOOKERS HAVE ENLARGED CROWDS, REQUIRING PRESENCE OF MILITARY AND POLICE TO KEEP THE PEACE.

2. GDRM OFFICIALS, INCLUDING NEW FOREIGN MINISTER RAKOTOMAVO, WHO IS EX-UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, HAVE TRIED TO CONVINCE STRIKING STUDENTS TO RETURN TO CLASSES WITH COMPELLING ARGUMENT THAT FAILURE TO BE ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR END-OF-SCHOOL-YEAR EXAMS IN OCTOBER WOULD RESULT IN LOSS OF ENTIRE YEAR OF STUDY. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS

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THAT THESE STUDENTS ARE STILL NOT SATISFIED WITH MINISTRY

OF EDUCATION'S MODIFICATIONS OF RECENT EDICTS, WHILE GDRM, PRESS, AND PRO-GDRM ORGANIZATIONS STRESS RADICAL LEFT, ANARCHISTIC AND IMPERIALIST-LEANING TENDENCIES OF THESE STUDENTS AND PROVOCATEURS. ALTHOUGH GDRM HAS REMOVED ROADBLOCKS LEADING TO UNIVERSITY WHERE EVERYTHING APPEARS TO BE QUIET, PATROLS OF 6-10 SOLDIERS ARE IN EVIDENCE NEAR PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND OTHER KEY LOCATIONS.

3. PALACE FIRE. DESPITE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON MORNING OF FIRE (REFTEL) THAT FIRE WAS ACCIDENTAL, GDRM APPARENTLY HAS REVERSED ITS OPINION AND HAS POINTED AT MFM AND OTHER "PSEUDO-REVOLUTIONARIES" AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR BLAZE. THERE IS NO REPORT YET OF BOARD OF INQUIRY. NORMALLY, 30-40 SOLDIERS STAND GUARD AT PLALACE, ALTHOUGH NUMBER ACTUALLY ON DUTY IN WEE HOURS OF MORNING WAS PROBABLY CONSIDERABLY LESS. NONETHELESS, ONE WONDERS HOW ACCIDENTAL FIRE COULD HAVE ESCAPED NOTICE LONG ENOUGH TO ENGULF BUILDING OR HOW ARSONISTS, IF THAT BE THE CASE, COULD HAVE SLIPPED PAST GUARDS ON BUILDING WHICH DOES NOT HAVE EASY ACCESS.

4. COMMENT: GDRM CONTINUES TO BE NERVOUS ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, AS EVIDENCED BY HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION GIVEN TO STUDENT STRIKERS AND BY OUTPOURING OF OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA ATTACKING EXTREMISTS AND IMPERIALISTS. SITUATION TODAY (SEPT 15) APPEARS TO BE QUIETER BUT IS NOT ENTIRELY RESOLVED, INDICATING THAT GDRM IS NOT IN FULL CONTROL. HOWEVER, AT LEAST GDRM HAS NOT RESORTED TO HARSH TACTICS WHICH WOULD FURTHER ALIENATE STUDENTS, AND GIVE ALL POLITICAL DISSIDENTS AMMUNITION FOR FURTHER ANTI-GDRM ACTIVITIES.SHEINBAUM

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